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Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Speakers tell Security Council Israeli settlements a threat to peace process in Middle East and must halt immediately.

+ General Assembly includes two new items on agenda related to financing and selection of judges for International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

+ Secretary-General chairs ACC Forum in Vienna on future of United Nations system.

+ UNHCR convoy caught in crossfire waits in central Bosnia; UNPROFOR and NATO agree there is no conclusive evidence of clandestine cargo deliveries to Tuzla area on 10 and 12 February.

+ Croatia says it is terminating UNPROFOR's mandate because Force has not helped control its borders, failed to implement Vance Plan's key provisions; and unable to demilitarize UNPAs.

+ Charter Committee hears of heavy economic losses to third States as result of Security Council sanctions.

+ Youth design project to commemorate fiftieth anniversary unveiled at United Nations Headquarters.

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Israel's resumption of settlements in the occupied Arab territories was a serious threat to the Middle East peace process and must be halted immediately, the Security Council was told yesterday, as it considered the situation in the occupied Arab territories. Several speakers said the settlement activity was an effort to prejudge future negotiations by creating a pre-existing situation on the ground, at a time when Israel had been expected to engage in confidence-building measures in support of the peace process.

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The Permanent Observer for Palestine, M. Nasser Al-Kidwa, said the Council had a responsibility regarding the cessation of Israeli settlements, which were a stark violation of the Declaration of Principles, the Fourth Geneva Convention and Council resolutions. The Council's failure to impose its will had enabled Israel to continue its settlement policy.

Israel's representative said since the establishment of the present Government in 1992, no new settlements had been established in the territories, nor would they be. Israel was building in Jerusalem, but so were the Arabs, he said. "They have not stopped building, and this is their right, we have not stopped building, and this is our right." According to agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the issue of settlements should be addressed through direct, bilateral negotiations and not taken up by the Council, he stressed.

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The General Assembly has decided to include in its agenda two new items related to the financing and selection of judges for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. The item on the Tribunal's financing will be allocated to the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary), and the item on the selection of judges will be considered in the plenary. The Secretary-General requested the inclusion of the items, following the Security Council's adoption of a resolution setting up the Tribunal.

Assembly President, Amara Essy (Côte d'Ivoire) appointed 25 experts in economics, finance and statistics to the Assembly's newly established intergovernmental ad hoc working group on the capacity to pay. The appointments, effective yesterday, were made following "extensive and arduous" consultations with the Chairmen of regional groups, the President said.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today in Vienna chaired the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Forum on the future of the United Nations system. Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky opened the ACC Forum. Presentations were made by special invitees, including Julius Nyrere, Chairman of the South Commission; Ingvar Carlsson, Prime Minister of Sweden; and Shridath Ramphal, Co-Chairman of the Commission on Global Governance.

The Secretary-General said history had shown it usually took several years after major political upheavals for new political systems to be put in place. The United Nations was at a crossroads, as Member States had not yet decided on the new rules governing international relations in the post cold war era and its changing role in a period of fundamental and rapid change, including technological innovations.

Last night, the Secretary-General met with Ilter Turkmen, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for

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Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to discuss its relocation to Gaza. He then met with Frederico Mayor, the Director-General of the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Tomorrow, the Secretary-General will address the Vienna Conference on Peace-keeping Operations, one of the first major events organized by the Austrian Government to mark the United Nations fiftieth Anniversary.

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A United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) convoy was caught in crossfire yesterday south of Velika Kladusa after delivering humanitarian aid to the Bihac pocket. All vehicles were now back in central Bosnia, waiting for the fighting to die down, according to a United Nations spokesman. However, fighting was still heavy south and southwest of Velika Kladusha as the rebel Muslim forces of Fikret Abdic tried to increase their territory by pushing the confrontation lines south.

Meanwhile, the United Nations has agreed with a report by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) that there was no conclusive evidence of clandestine cargo deliveries being made to the Tuzla area in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 10 and 12 February. The spokesman said the NATO investigation brought a significant amount of information to the attention of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) concerning the presence in the area of NATO aircraft on those dates.

While UNPROFOR has not revised its observations, some have been explained by the presence of NATO aircraft in the area on those dates, the spokesman continued. Not all the observations have been fully explained and some may never be. It was agreed that reporting procedures should be improved so that UNPROFOR was made more promptly aware of NATO activity, he said.

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The Croatian Government had decided to terminate the mandate of UNPROFOR because it had been totally unable to implement the key provisions of the Vance Plan, the Commission on Human Rights was told yesterday. Croatia's Deputy Prime Minister Mate Granic said his Government had also made that decision because the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) had not been demilitarized, and illegal paramilitary Serb units were not yet disarmed. Even worse was the fact that UNPROFOR had failed to contribute properly to the full and effective control of Croatia's borders, he said.

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Bulgaria's losses as a result of the strict implementation of Security Council sanctions against Iraq, Libya and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) amounted to almost 25 per cent of its estimated gross national product (GNP) for 1995. The representative of Bulgaria was addressing the Special Committee on the Charter and the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization today as it continued its general debate. He called

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for the speedy development of means to assist third States affected by the application of sanctions under Chapter VII of the Charter.

The representative of Japan said his country had provided about $2.5 billion in economic assistance to third States affected by sanctions during the Persian Gulf crisis. The response by the international community during such crises must be flexible and specific, he said. The expertise of international financial and development agencies was required to integrate assistance in the development policies of recipient countries.

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As part of the United Nations fiftieth anniversary celebrations, the Swiss watch company SMH/Swatch today introduced an international youth design project. The Chairman of SMH/Swatch, Nicolas Hayek, and Under-Secretary-General Gillian Sorensen also unveiled a commemorative watch, "UNlimited Chronograph". A portion of the proceeds from its sale will benefit the UN50 Trust Fund, in support of education and communication projects for youth.

Young artists from around the world presented their fabric designs which will be used to cover the seats in the General Assembly Hall during the United Nations International School (UNIS)/UN Conference on 2 and 3 March. The slipcovers incorporate a design tapestry of images that symbolize the theme "Trust and Fairness". Both the watch and the fabric designs were created under the auspices of YA/YA (Young Aspirations/Young Artists. Inc.), a non-profit organization that provides opportunities for inner-city youth.

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